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## Football for Hope festival launches in Alex

LIONEL FAULL | JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA - Mar 25 2010 17:17

Alexandra township in Johannesburg will host an alternative soccer tournament for impoverished youth from all over the world during the Soccer World Cup.

All 10 of South Africa's World Cup ultra-modern [soccer stadiums](#) have been built or refurbished, immaculate pitches laid, and hundreds of thousands of match tickets booked.

But in the narrow back streets of Alexandra, an 11th stadium is being built, and a very different event is taking shape.

The [Football for Hope Festival](#) will bring together 32 youth delegations from impoverished communities for a two-week celebration of cultural exchange, social development and soccer.

Football for Hope is a partnership between Fifa, [streetfootballworld](#), the City of Johannesburg and the World Cup Local Organising Committee (LOC).

Fifa's head of corporate social responsibility Federico Addierchi told the *Mail & Guardian* that Fifa has set aside between \$4-million and \$5-million for the festival. Fifa will construct a 3 000-seater temporary stadium complete with artificial turf and a media centre on the grounds of an existing community sports centre, the 3 Square Sports Facility. In addition, 140 out of 320 Football for Hope Festival volunteers will also come from Alexandra.

The City of Johannesburg has earmarked R2-million for upgrading and renovating community centres in Alexandra, including 3 Square.

Once the festival is over, elements of Fifa's temporary stadium -- including its artificial pitch -- will be transferred to a nearby facility in Alexandra which has been designated as one of Fifa's "[20 Centres for 2010](#)". Fifa plans to construct 20 of these multi-purpose public health, education and football facilities centres in Africa as part of its 2010 legacy.

Speaking at the festival inauguration in Alexandra on Thursday, LOC CEO Danny Jordaan said, "This World Cup isn't just about the big stars -- the Messis, the Ronaldos, the Rooneys -- but also about bringing hope, change and opportunities to communities like Alexandra."

Jordaan said that unlike Bafana Bafana's World Cup group matches, tickets for the Football for Hope Festival had already sold out.

"We will support the people of Alexandra to be able to host the world, and ask in return that this township shows that it cares about the ambitions of its youth," Jordaan said.

Thursday's inauguration was also an opportunity to unveil Team Alexandra -- the host delegation -- or the "Bafana Bafana of Alex", as they are informally known.

Team Alexandra comprises four boys and four girls aged between 15 and 18. The individual team members were selected through their roles as community role-models and their volunteer work in Play Soccer, a grassroots soccer and social development in Alexandra township.

Catherine Skhosana (18) will represent Team Alexandra during the festival. She said: "It is a privilege that Alex has been chosen to host this event. It shows we are getting somewhere, and that for me, as a young black woman, I am getting somewhere."

Skhosana's teammate Lebogang Ngwako (18) plays club soccer for Sandton FC, but says he enjoys coaching younger players in his spare time.

"After the festival is over, my dream in life is to help develop young people through education and soccer," Ngwako said.

Team Alexandra will host boys and girls from 40 countries, whose organisations tackle social issues using soccer -- such as the Peace Team, a combined Israeli-Palestinian delegation; Football United, an Australian team featuring Asian immigrants; Football Friends, with representatives from five war-torn Balkan countries; and Delegação Brasileira from the Brazilian favelas, or slums.

During the first week of the festival, delegations will spend time getting to know one another, exchanging stories and celebrating their cultural diversity. During the second week, the teams will take part in a five-a-side soccer tournament. The mixed teams will compete without referees, and will have to resolve on-field disagreements through dialogue.

Team Alexandra has been training together three times a week, and showed their understanding on the pitch by beating a star-studded team of former Bafana Bafana players 2-1 after the Festival launch on Thursday afternoon.

**Source: Mail & Guardian Online**

**Web Address: <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2010-03-25-football-for-hope-festival-launches-in-alex>**

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